

FANCIFUL TALES  
*From* LEGENDS *of the*  
ADIRONDACK INDIANS

KATE BREWER

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**FANCIFUL TALES FROM LEGENDS  
OF THE ADIRONDACK INDIANS**





# FANCIFUL TALES FROM LEGENDS OF THE ADIRONDACK INDIANS



BY

KATE BREWER



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*L. F. W.*

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"The noonday sun shines down on the beautiful lake."



**THE BIRTH OF THE WHITE  
WATER LILY**



“Ye who love a nation’s legends,  
Love the ballads of a people,  
That like voices from afar off  
Call to us to pause and listen,  
Speak in tones so plain and childlike,  
Scarcely can the ear distinguish  
Whether they are sung or spoken;—  
Listen to this Indian Legend.”



## THE BIRTH OF THE WHITE WATER LILY

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All is excitement in the Indian village; the women have prepared a great feast and the maidens are decked out in all their ornaments. Wayotah, the young chief, has returned from his victorious warpath and the joyful welcome which belongs to the victor awaits him. The noonday sun shines down on the beautiful lake, so placid in the shimmering heat of the summer day. Wayotah is surrounded by his tribe, all looking in admiration at him. And he is good to look at, this young chief of scarce twenty-five summers. Tall and straight as an arrow he is, with smooth brown limbs, which at every move show the strong, firm muscles. His plume of feathers waves back from his brow,

from beneath which his eyes look black and piercing.

Many there are in the group about him, hearing the story of his exploit, but his eyes rest not on any till, on the outskirts of the throng and almost beyond reach of his voice, he reaches her he has sought, and holds her with his steady gaze. Not a pause in his story indicates to the listening tribe that his thoughts are wandering, but as the maiden meets his eye a dusky red mounts to her cheek and slowly and sadly she shakes her head; then brushing her hand hastily across her eyes, she turns toward the lake and is soon lost to sight among the trees. Concluding his tale somewhat hastily, Wayotah retires to his cabin and drops the deer skin before the entrance.

Waiting a moment to be sure the tribe still remains before the hut, he carefully makes his way out of the rear, and by making a wide detour through the forest reaches the lake without being seen. So

much time had it taken that when he reached the edge of the lake, where the canoes were pulled up. Oseetah's canoe was but a speck nearing the opposite shore.

Dropping silently into his birch bark, he pushed out and pulled after the girl with long, swift strokes. Rapidly he gained on the figure ahead, but before he could reach her, or she had become aware of his presence, Oseetah had sprung from her skiff and was climbing the hill which rose steeply from the lake. Little heeding the wild creatures which froze into statues at her approach, she walked rapidly along till she reached an open knoll below which a huge rock rose a sheer fifty feet above the lake. Here she flung herself face down on the soft turf and lay motionless. Suddenly she lifted her head and listened, then sprang to her feet, clasping her hands over her throbbing heart. It was but a second before the bushes parted and Wayotah stood before her.

"Only Oseetah has no word for Wayotah on his return from a victory over his enemies."

Still the quivering girl remained silent, till with one step he reached her side and drew her to him. Then with a quick movement she tore herself from his embrace, and drawing herself to her full height replied:

"Very thankful is Oseetah that the chief returns to the tribe uninjured, and very thankful, too, must be the little bright-eyed Kewah that her brave returns. When dost thou make thy wedding-feast with her? Much time has gone now since she was promised to thee."

The chief's brow darkened and he made a motion to regain her side, but her eye forbade him.

"Oseetah, Wayotah loves not the little Kewah and will not take her to his cabin. Had his eyes but fallen on thee first, his promise would not have been given her.



Come with me, and we will find another brave for the little Kewah."

Oseetah shook her head.

"No, that would be wrong, and Wayotah, the chief of his tribe, cannot do such a thing. Go to Kewah and forget that thou hast loved Oseetah and that she hast loved thee!"

At her last words a fire leaped into the Indian's eyes, and disregarding her look which forbade him, he clasped her in his arms and said:

"Oseetah, since thou lovest me, thou shalt come with me. It's not Wayotah who pleads with thee, but the chief who commands, and thou darest not disobey."

Oseetah rested quietly in his strong young arms a moment, then replied:

"Wayotah, because Oseetah loves thee and thy honor more than life, she cannot let thee do this thing. The Great Spirit will be angry with thee and prosperity will leave thy tribe. Farewell, Wayotah! Oseetah goes, but leaves thee thy honor!"

With these words the Indian girl broke from him and with one leap plunged headlong from the steep rock into the lake, the water closing over her head.

She never rose, and though the chief swam for hours he failed to find a trace of her body. Returning to the village he instituted a search which lasted till the moon had risen. No one found a trace or clue to aid in the recovering of the body of the favorite of the tribe. At last, in sorrow the searchers returned to lament and mourn.

The following day some of the young men went to the spot to see if perchance the body had risen, and returned with the astounding news that where the girl had gone down there were beautiful white flowers growing on the surface of the water. Such a thing seemed too wonderful to be true, so the tribe, in a body, paddled to the place. Sure enough, the water was covered with beautiful flowers with

delicate white petals and rich golden centres.

“It is the beautiful white soul of Oseetah, with her heart of gold, come back to us in this form.” And they sorrowed no more for the maiden whose purity and love remained always with them in the form of the beautiful white lily which spread and multiplied through all the waters fed by the lake of the Saranacs.







" Night settled down "

## THE INDIAN PLUME





**“Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of  
woman’s devotion,  
List to the mournful tradition, still sung by  
the pines in the forest.”**



## THE INDIAN PLUME

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Severe had been the winter for the tribe on the shores of the "lake of the clustered stars." Long had the snow lain on the ground and constantly had the cold wind blown. It had not been a good season for hunting, either, and long trips had to be taken on snow-shoes in order to shoot the fleet-footed deer. Even now, though the late April sun was shining, there was ice floating in the lake and patches of snow gleamed white in the forest. New life was just beginning to show itself in the hearts of the Indian people and there was stir and movement in the village. Thank-offerings were made to the Great Spirit that the winter was over, and many were the rejoicings at the greening of the grass and the swelling of the buds on the trees.

Very happy indeed was the tribe, until suddenly a strange sickness appeared among them. Young and old alike it attacked, tortured them a few hours and left them cold and dead. Panic spread through the village and a despair, which even the cold of the winter had not produced, settled down.

Such was the state of affairs in the tribe of the Saranacs as the beautiful spring came on, when the wild creatures ran merrily about the forest and the fish again sported in the sparkling water.

"It is a punishment sent by the Great Spirit, Sewanee, and the chief is to smoke the 'Calumet pipe' to-night when the moon rises."

"Surely, Flying Arrow, the Great Spirit will hear our prayers and lamentations when the smoke of the sweet Calumet ascends to him?"

The speaker was a girl of the tribe, perhaps in her seventeenth year. Tall she was and very beautiful as she stood, in

the afternoon sunlight, by the side of the straight-limbed brave—her promised husband.

“I can not tell. It may be that there will have to be sacrifice ere the Great Spirit removes his displeasure from us.”

“Think you the chief will offer the white dog to appease the Great Spirit’s wrath?”

“I know not. It may be that even the blood of one of the tribe will be needed before this dreadful ‘quick death’ will go from our midst.”

“That would indeed be horrible!” replied the girl, with a shudder, as she pressed closer to the Arrow’s side and clasped her hands about his arm.

“Do not be afraid, my Sewanee; when this plague has left the village, then the chief will bless us and I will take thee to the wigwam I have but now finished. Come, let us go down to the lake; the canoe is waiting and it grows late.”

With these words the two passed from sight among the trees, following a trail to the little beach, where the slender birch-bark craft was pulled up out of the water.

One by one the furtive wild creatures, finding themselves in possession of the silent knoll, scampered from their hiding places and ran to and fro, busy, most of them, looking for their spring quarters or on the search for food. "Quick death" ever stalks among the creatures of fur and feather, but beyond being ever alert for the sound or smell of enemies, little they trouble themselves.

As the shadows lengthened and finally disappeared in the enveloping twilight, the sounds gradually ceased and the little knoll sank into the darkness of the growing night, till the light of the rising moon reached it through the stems of the sharply pointed balsams which surround it.

In the Indian village a great stillness reigned—not the stillness of the balsam grove, but the stillness which is

sometimes noticed when numbers of people are gathered together waiting tensely. Slowly the smoke ascended as the chief puffed at the long-stemmed sacred pipe. The fire sank to a bed of glowing coals and the moon rose ever higher and higher ; still, in silence, the chief smoked on, till at last the pipe was burnt out, when he rose, and without a word disappeared within the doorway of his wigwam. Slowly the people scattered, exchanging now and then a word, but for the most part silent. Night settled down but there was not rest for the Indians. The dreaded "quick death" still strode among them, striking down one after the other. Cries and groans filled the night. The Great Spirit had not heard their prayers while the smoke of the Calumet ascended to him.

Morning dawned on a now thoroughly grief-stricken people. In vain the chief spoke to them words of encouragement. In vain he bade them assemble for the sacrifice of the sacred white dog. No hope

showed itself on the countenances of the now sadly diminished tribe.

Silently they looked on while the chief killed and burned the spotless animal.

In the mean time, Sewanee, in passing the new wigwam of Flying Arrow, heard her name called in agony, and hesitating but one moment she entered the low doorway, and her eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, she descried Flying Arrow lying on his mat, tossing in agony. One glance told her he was a victim of the terrible plague. With one low cry she fell on her face beside him, then lifting his head on her lap she laid her cool hand on his hot brow and strove to quiet him. Useless her caressing touch; his tossing and raving continued. Frequently among his mutterings she heard the words, "Sewanee," "Great Spirit," and "blood sacrifice." Finally the long limbs straightened themselves, the fire died out of his eyes, and looking up into her sorrowing face he breathed rather than spoke the



words: "Happy hunting-grounds—Sewanee—come!" She sat quietly holding his head pressed to her for some moments, the tears slowly dropping from her eyes. Then quickly but gently she closed the eyes, laid the head again on the mat and hurried to where the tribe was gathered.

As she walked rapidly along, the meaning of the Arrow's last words came to her and her resolve shaped itself. Reaching the assembled tribe, now just dispersing, she dropped on her knees before the chief and told him of what had taken place, how Flying Arrow, with his last breath, had bid her come to the "Great Spirit." Then, standing upright, with outstretched arms, she said:

"O my people, to rid us of this plague which has come among us it is needed that one must die willingly. The Great Spirit has not taken it from us, though the Calumet has been smoked and the white dog slain. Who should better die than I? All desire for life has gone from me with

the passing of the breath of Flying Arrow."

With these words she commenced a slow swaying motion, at the same time singing her death chant. Gradually the motions quickened, as the chant increased in volume till it was almost a song of triumph. At a moment when the song was almost glorious, she raised her right hand and plunged a dagger in her heart. Tenderly the stoical Indians lifted her from the ground, stained red with blood, and bore her away for burial beside her brave.

That day there were no more victims to the "quick death," and when morning dawned, serene and beautiful, they found raising its head to the sunlight on the spot where Sewanee's blood had stained the ground, the glorious blossoms now called Indian Plume.

The "quick death" never appeared again among the Saranacs, and they always remembered Sewanee and her sacri-

fice, for wherever the Saranacs wandered the Indian Plume sprang up and still grows.







"No sound broke the stillness of the autumn day"

## **THE TRIBE DIVIDED**





**“This is the forest primeval. The murmuring  
pines and the hemlocks,  
Bearded with moss, and in garments green,  
indistinct in the twilight,  
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and  
prophetic.”**



## THE TRIBE DIVIDED

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“O my friend, the moon wanes and the deer roams undisturbed in the forest; the nights are not yet cold and the hunter will surely have luck with his bow and arrow.”

Soaring Eagle stretched his long limbs in the warm September sun and regarded the speaker with an expression in which affection was mingled with admiration.

The two young men were lounging on a grassy knoll which sloped down to the blue water of the Saranac Lake. The soft September haze hid the more distant mountains but only served to enhance the beauty of the scene which was spread before the two swarthy young athletes. No sound broke the stillness of the autumn day, save a bird call in the forest around

them, or the fluttering of a brilliant leaf which the gently stirring breeze wafted to their feet.

"See, my brother," continued Crouching Wolf, "everything is favorable and before many days the cold rains will come and the hunter's luck desert him."

Soaring Eagle raised himself to a sitting posture and laid his arm affectionately on his friend's shoulder.

"Well," he finally assented, "Crouching Wolf says the word. When shall we start?"

"To-night, when the darkness settles on the land and the woods are still."

The two braves were rivals in the tribe, but at the same time fast friends from boyhood. These two could run a little faster and a little farther than any other young men in the village, and at feast times many ponies, canoes and arrows were won and lost as persons wagered one or the other would win in the games and tests of strength and skill. Through the

rivalry the closest comradeship reigned. They shared their goods in common and knew not the feeling of anger or jealousy toward each other.

So, when the shadows fell on the forest and the stars were mirrored in the lake, Crouching Wolf said farewell to his wife and the two struck into the blackness of the forest. Everything was still. So softly did the Indians move that hardly a leaf rustled or a twig snapped. After a few hours' walk they reached a huge balsam tree, around which the ground, by some freak of nature, was clear of underbrush. Here they threw themselves on the ground and slept till the shadows grew gray and the animal life began to be astir.

"In four suns Soaring Eagle will meet his brother here and together we will return to the village."

"Crouching Wolf will be here ere the time and the village will welcome our return with venison for all."

With these words the young men parted, each one going his separate way, and the forest was left in silence.

On the evening of the fourth day a mighty shout resounded through the forest, and a moment later a hunter staggered into the little clearing, carrying a huge deer on his shoulders. Seeing the place unoccupied by human being, he dropped his burden to the ground and began to investigate the surroundings. No sign to show that human foot had stepped there since the morning he had separated from his friend. Making a hollow of his hands and raising them to his mouth he uttered a peculiar cry. Only the echo replied. Satisfying himself that his friend was not in the vicinity, Crouching Wolf proceeded to light a fire and make himself comfortable for the night. Morning dawned and grew to midday and still the Soaring Eagle visited not the spot. In the afternoon Crouching Wolf

scattered the ashes of his fire, ground out the sparks, and disappeared in the wood, returning late in the night alone, but with an anxious face. Four more days the hunter waited and searched; then abandoning all hope of finding his friend, he started for the village.

It was mid-afternoon when, without a shout of triumph, Crouching Wolf strode into the village, deposited the deer skin at the door of his wigwam and turned to face the rapidly assembling tribe. Raising his hand to command silence he said:

"Brothers, a great sorrow has come among us. Soaring Eagle has vanished. I do not know where he is."

The silence of apprehension fell on the tribe as he finished his story. No one stirred but the wife of Crouching Wolf, who laid her hand on his arm and looked up into his face. Presently the chief, stepping forward, said in angry tones:

"Thou liest! Jealousy has entered into thy heart and the evil spirit has whispered

to thee to kill Soaring Eagle when his friends were not near, and hide his body. My son, the tribe harbors not a liar."

The man in the doorway started, and braced his shoulder against the wigwam, then with a smile of scorn replied:

"Crouching Wolf does not lie. It is as he has said. Who says it is not, is himself a liar!"

His eyes were raised above the chief and gazed far beyond the limits of the village into space, thus he did not see the movement of the chief toward him, nor the lifting of his knife. With a piercing shriek the wife, whose eyes had been fixed on the chief, sprang forward and flung herself upon her husband's breast, clasping her arms about his neck and lifting her face to his.

It was all so quick—the knife blade sank between her shoulders and her head dropped back. With a yell of rage, Crouching Wolf, still clasping his wife's murdered form, sprang on the chief and



clove his skull with his ax. The village was thrown into confusion and that night the tribe divided, Crouching Wolf and his friends going to the lower lake while the chief's family and followers remained on the upper Saranac and the shores of Tupper Lake.

Years passed, and the young Crouching Wolf, now chief of his band, had grown to be an old man. There was much blood-shed whenever the two bands came in contact and many braves were slain.

One day a canoe was seen approaching the village. As it touched the shore an old man stepped out and Crouching Wolf again beheld his friend, Soaring Eagle. The story was soon told. On leaving Crouching Wolf, the morning of the hunt, Soaring Eagle had missed his footing and fallen down the face of a steep cliff, breaking some of his bones and sinking into unconsciousness. Here some Frenchmen, returning from a hunt, had found him and carried him into Canada with

them, where he had married and lived till old age crept on him, and with it the desire to die among his people.

Thus the divided tribe reunited and great were the rejoicings on the shores of the beautiful "Lake of the clustered stars."





“ In the shadows of the shore ”

WHEN LOVE FOUND OUT A WAY



**“Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,  
Who have faith in God and Nature,  
Who believe that in all ages  
Every human heart is human,  
That in even savage bosoms  
There are longings, yearnings, strivings  
For the good they comprehend not,  
That the feeble hands and helpless,  
Groping blindly in the darkness,  
Touch God’s right hand in that darkness  
And are lifted up and strengthened;—  
Listen to this simple story.”**





## WHEN LOVE FOUND OUT A WAY

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Just above the steep rock known as "Devil's Rock" stood a huge pine tree. Many years it had stood there and looked down on the silver lake. Many years had it dropped its needles on the ground till they had made a soft, thick, fragrant carpet. It had been a large, strong tree many years before the Saranacs were divided, and had looked over the water to see the canoes gathering for many a festivity. Many sights had the old tree seen and some had made it shiver through all its branches. Often, when members of the divided tribe had met, had the earth beneath it been dyed red with blood shed in hot anger.

But there were no war cries on this still day; not a sound broke the stillness, save

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the gentle washing of the water against the steep sides of the rock, and yet the old tree was waiting. Silent, motionless, grand, it waited.

Presently through the stillness sounded the lightest foot-fall on the carpet of needles and a tall, straight Indian girl came into view, looking from side to side, as though expecting to see some one or something. Finding the spot deserted she seated herself under the tree and leaned her smooth dark head against the old trunk. Then indeed the old tree was happy and spread out its branches lovingly above her.

The sun's rays were already coming aslant through the trees, when a canoe shot into sight from around a bend in the shore. The girl was instantly on her feet and waved her slim brown hand to the occupant of the little boat. Quickly and noiselessly the brave paddled along, keeping close in the shadows along the bank. There seems to be hardly a landing place,

but Howling Wind knows the bank and soon the canoe is pulled up under some overhanging bushes and a few steps bring him to the waiting Winowah.

"Winowah has waited for thee," said the girl, "and feared lest misfortune had come close on thy track."

"Misfortune comes not to Howling Wind," answered the young man as he stretched himself on the soft pine needles at her feet and gazed into her face above him.

"Yet," replied the girl slowly, in the soft monotone of her race, "I had much difficulty in stealing away to-day and I fear I am being watched. If my father should take thee—" She stopped speaking and shuddered at the thought of what might happen in that case.

"Why should Howling Wind fear? Can he not choose whom he will?"

"Yes," she answered, "and yet here are maidens, comely maidens of his own tribe, who would go with him. Winowah's

heart aches, but she fears for her brave, and this is the last time to meet."

Howling Wind rose quickly and seated himself beside her, looking smilingly into her sombre face. Seeing there no gleam of light, but only apprehension and grief, he clasped his hands and laid them gently in her lap.

"See, Winowah, Howling Wind belongs to thee only. What wilt thou have him to do?"

The girl made no reply, but laid both of her hands on the strong ones in her lap and looked sadly at him.

"Come, most beautiful of all maidens," he said, "ere the moon rises let us be gone. My canoe will take thee safely to my own people and there all is ready for Winowah. There are soft skins on the floor of the cabin and many vessels there for her. Come."

But the girl was not listening to him; her head was bent slightly forward and her ear turned in the direction from

whence she had come. Quickly she laid her hand on his mouth, to still the words he would speak, and pointed to the canoe. Howling Wind leaped noiselessly to his feet, but it was too late. Half a dozen swarthy figures stepped round him and pinioned his arms. It was all done so quickly, so noiselessly, that Winowah found herself walking swiftly along through the forest before she well realized what had happened. She was not bound, but a well-armed Indian walked on either side of her. Indeed the precaution was unnecessary, for she had no wish to escape. Her lover was going to certain death, how horrible a death she did not know, and she—she would go with him to the end, and if they let her live after him—there was always the friendly lake for her, so they could go together to the "Happy Hunting Grounds."

These were the thoughts which passed rapidly through her mind as she walked through the silent forest where the moc-

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casined feet of the little company made no noise.

Arriving in the village, the tribe was seen to be gathered around a blazing fire which made the moonlight pale. The girl shuddered as she came into the firelight, for she pictured her lover slowly burning while she was compelled to look on.

Listen! Some one is speaking! She pulled herself together, with a start, as she realized her father, the chief, was addressing his people.

"See," the old man said, "this is a son of the lower Saranac tribe, our enemies, and he has tried to steal my daughter from among us. How shall he meet his death?"

There was silence for the space of a minute, then an old man stepped forward and said:

"Our chief is a brave man. It is for him to say."

Silence again fell on the people. The chief passed his hand across his brow and

then, without looking at the girl, lifted his right hand and spoke:

“Very wrong it is to select for a husband a man of an unfriendly tribe, but we must look for falseness, since falseness it was which caused the division of the once mighty tribe of the Saranacs. Howling Wind shall die by the hatchet and Winowah it shall be who shall cleave his skull.”

For one moment Winowah stood as though struck a terrible blow, then raised her head, and with one glance at her lover as he stood bound fast, she stepped into the light cast by the blazing fire. Proudly she bore herself, as became a chief's daughter, and there were many admiring glances cast on her as, unwaveringly, she received the hatchet from her father's hand. Surprise was written on the faces of the tribe as she walked to where her lover stood a little apart, with his hands bound behind him. Lifting the hatchet firmly in her hand she brought it down—on the

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cords which bound her lover's hands, severing them cleanly.

Before the astonished tribe had realized that instead of a broken heap, there was an empty space where the captive had stood, Howling Wind and Winowah were deep in the forest, running noiselessly, Winowah leading the way, till they turned off the trail and crouched in a shallow cleft of rock hidden by bushes.

Silence ceased to reign in the forest. There were cries and torches and much passing. Finally, when the sounds had gone beyond them, Winowah, grasping her lover's hand, led him by a circuitous route to where his canoe was still hidden in the bushes.

Softly they pushed off and paddled in the shadows of the shore, making for the lower lake. When they had gone in silence far from the noise of search they floated out into the middle of the silver lake. The round moon shone down on



them and the night winds whispered to them softly as they floated on to where the little cabin was waiting with the soft skins on the floor.













